Nixon Promises Fight Over Calls To Resign

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WASHINGTON (AP) — House Republicans who had led President Nixon's defense called for him to resign or face certain impeachment, but the embattled chief executive vowed Tuesday he would fight to remain in office.

As they emerged from the 90-minute meeting with the President, Cabinet members quoted him as saying he "intends to stay on and allow the Constitution to be the overriding factor."

But by midday his support had evaporated in the House of Representatives, where a vote on impeachment is scheduled before the end of August.

All 10 House Judiciary Committee Republicans who were the President's hard-line defenders said if he didn't resign they would support an impeachment article charging obstruction of justice.

The tidal wave that swept away the last slender hopes of averting impeachment by the House was generated by Nixon himself on Monday when he admitted that six days after the June 17, 1972 Watergate break-in, he approved an attempt to thwart the FBI investigation.

The President made public transcripts of three conversations he had on June 23, 1972, with H.R. Haldeman, then White House staff chief, and acknowledged they would damage his case and show he had made erroneous statements about the break-in to the American public.

It was clear from the initial reaction that House members who had fought hardest against impeachment regarded the new disclosures as the hard evidence they had insisted was lacking.

Rep. Edward Hutchinson of Michigan, ranking Republican on the Judiciary Committee, said he felt he had been deceived.

"It is clear to me the evidence is there to support Article I, the obstruction of justice charge," said Hutchinson, who voted against all three impeachment articles sent to the House by the committee.

The other two articles charged Nixon with abusing the powers of his office by attempting to misuse government agencies and with contempt of Congress for his refusal to give the Judiciary Committee evidence it demanded.

Most House members who said the new evidence had forced them to change their position and support Article I, coupled it with a plea to Nixon to resign.

Rep. Charles W. Sandman Jr., D-N.J., said he hoped Nixon would "act with dispatch" to resign. "My view now is the (House) vote will be practically unanimous."

But from the Nixon Cabinet came renewed word that the beleagured President had no intention of leaving office voluntarily.

"The President sincerely believes he has not committed an impeachable offense," said Treasury Secretary William E. Simon. "He also believes the Constitution provides for a process that should, indeed, be overriding."